

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 8230

EXDIS

DEPT PASS USIA FOR INA:NALLE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EG, US
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SADAT'S REQUEST FOR TDY PUBLIC RELATIONS
SPECIALIST

1. LAST FRIDAY EVENING FAHMY TELEPHONED TO CONVEY A REQUEST FROM PRESIDENT SADAT FOR A SPECIALIST IN PUBLIC RELATIONS TO TRAIN APPROPRIATE PRESIDENCY OFFICIALS FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS. SADAT ASKED THAT WE CHOOSE THE PERSON, BUT EMPHASIZED WE MUST BE 100 PERCENT SURE OF HIS RELIABILITY AND DISCRETION. ALTHOUGH A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL WOULD DO, FAHMY THOUGHT THAT A USG OFFICIAL, IF AVAILABLE, WOULD DO BETTER. ASKED IF HE COULD REFINES THE PRESIDENT'S CONCEPT A BIT, FAHMY SAID HE COULD NOT. HE KNEW THAT SADAT IS DISTURBED THAT HIS PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF IS NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS IT MIGHT BE. HENCE, FAHMY THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT PROBABLY HAD IN MIND NOT ONLY TRAINING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES, BUT ALSO SETTING UP AN APPROPRIATE ORGANIZATION.

2. I TOLD FAHMY THAT WHAT HE HAD GIVEN ME WAS LITTLE TO GO ON AND THAT I WOULD RAISE THE MATTER WITH SADAT WHEN I SAW THE PRESIDENT IN ALEXANDRIA THE FOLLOWING
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DAY. I DID SO AND ASKED IF THE PRESIDENT COULD REFINES EXACTLY WHAT HE HAD IN MIND. SADAT WAS ALSO GENERAL AND SPOKE PRETTY MUCH ALONG THE ABOVE LINES. HE DID IDENTIFY TWO MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF IN PARTICULAR WHO HE FELT NEEDED FURTHER TRAINING, SAAD ZAGHLUL NASSAR, HIS PRESS ADVISER, AND MS. HEMMIT MUSTAFA OF THE EGYPTIAN STATE TELEVISION. SADAT INDICATED THAT

HE WANTED BOTH OF THEM GIVEN SOME INTENSIVE TRAINING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS TECHNIQUES AS THEY AFFECT PRESS, TELEVISION AND OTHER PUBLIC MEDIA. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANY HELP WE MAY BE ABLE TO GIVE IN THIS SPHERE.

3. I RECOMMEND WE BE AS RESPONSIVE AS POSSIBLE TO THIS PRESIDENTIAL REQUEST. SADAT'S PROBLEM, AS WE SEE IT, IS COMBINATION OF POOR MANAGEMENT AND INADEQUATE INFORMATION POLICY. PRESIDENT IS HIS OWN BEST PUBLIC RELATIONS PERFORMER, BUT PRESIDENCY OFFICE AND VARIOUS MINISTRIES ARE NOT SKILLED IN EXPLAINING TO EGYPTIAN OR FOREIGN AUDIENCES WHAT GOVERNMENT IS DOING. RADIO, TV AND PRESS REACH HUGE AUDIENCES, BUT CONTENT IS WEAK OR NOT CREDIBLE. PRESIDENT'S PRESS ADVISOR NASSAR DID HAVE SEVERAL MONTHS CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON LAST SUMMER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS JOB, TO WHICH HE WAS NEWLY ASSIGNED FOLLOWING LONG CAREER WITH EGYPTIAN RADIO. DESPITE CLOSE LOOK AT WHITE HOUSE AND STATE PRESS OFFICES, AND DISCUSSIONS WITH SEVERAL SECTIONS OF USIA, HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO SHAPE UP HIS OFFICE SINCE RETURNING TO CAIRO IN SEPTEMBER. AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS DEALING WITH OFFICE FIND IT INEFFICIENT, AND NASSAR APPARENTLY DOES NOT HAVE SMOOTH COORDINATION WITH VARIOUS MINISTRIES ON INFORMATION POLICY. SADAT HAS CONFIDENCE IN HIM (NASSAR WAS ONE OF SENIOR MEMBERS OF OFFICIAL PARTY ACCOMPANYING PRESIDENT TO WASHINGTON IN APRIL) BUT OBVIOUSLY SEES NEED FOR FURTHER "TRAINING". OTHER CANDIDATE FOR TRAINING IS TV ANNOUNCER MUSTAFA, CONFIDENTIAL

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WHO WAS CHOSEN BY TV DIRECTOR TO HANDLE USIA-SPONSORED LIVE SATELLITE BROADCAST OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S INAUGURATION JANUARY 20.

4. WE HAVE NOT YET DISCUSSED THIS REQUEST WITH NASSER. WISH FIRST TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO TRY TO HELP ON THIS PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT BE ASSURED OF MAKING MAJOR IMPACT, OUR MAKING THE EFFORT WOULD BE USEFUL. SUGGEST, AS FIRST STEP, THAT PUBLIC AFFAIRS EXPERT KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT EGYPT, SUCH AS ISA SABBAGH, BE SENT ON TDY FOR 3-4 DAYS ASAP TO HELP US EVALUATE HOW TO PROCEED. THEN WE WOULD RECOMMEND TYPE OF SPECIALIST WE WOULD NEED FOR 3-MONTH TDY. PROBABLY LATTER WOULD NEED MANAGERIAL SKILLS AND FAMILIARITY WITH ALL MEDIA, HOPEFULLY EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRY IF NOT IN ARAB WORLD. A FORMER WHITE HOUSE PRESS OFFICE STAFFER LIKE LES JANKA OR GERALD WARREN, MIGHT BE RIGHT; WILLIAM BEECHER (EX-DOD) ALSO A POSSIBILITY.

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